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The Mount Pleasant Community School District received a Harkin fire safety grant totaling \$150,000 which it used to install fire and smoke detectors in the middle school, Salem Elementary and WisdomQuest facilities. The Federal grant has made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Mount Pleasant Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education, president Regina Erickson, vice president Lois Roth, Brad Holtkamp, Chris Prellwitz, John Schaeetz, Ken Feldmann, and Melodee Yaley, and former members, David McCoid, Arlo Sandersfeld, Sharleen Bertling, Steve Wettach, and Lois Crane. I would also like to recognize superintendent John Roederer and director of buildings and grounds Mark Porth.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Mount Pleasant Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them and wish them a very successful new school year.●

MUSCATINE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Muscatine Community School District and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Muscatine Community School District received Harkin grants totaling \$2,600,250 which it used to help modernize and make safety improvements to schools throughout the district. The district received three construction grants totaling \$2,010,250 to help build additions at Mulberry Elementary School, McKinley Elementary School, and Muscatine High School and to renovate the middle school. The district received three fire safety grants totaling \$590,000 to make safety improvements in several schools in the district. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of schools that every child in America deserves.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Muscatine Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of past and present members of the board of education, Tom Welk, Kris Weis, Bob Torgerson, Nancy Byrnes, Paul Reeb, Ann Hart, Robert Leech, Paul Brooks, Clyde Evans, Robin Krueger, Jerry Lange, Joyce Haller, and Tammi Drawbaugh. I would also like to recognize superintendent Dr. Tom Williams.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

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NORWALK COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Norwalk Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Norwalk Community School District received several Harkin grants totaling \$2,420,788 which it used to help modernize and make safety improvements throughout the district. The district received three construction grant totaling \$2 million. The first grant helped build additions to Oviatt Elementary to provide a new media center, a technology lab and two kindergarten classrooms to ensure adequate space for all-day kindergarten. The second two grants helped build Eastview School to serve 8th and 9th grade students and construct corridor links to the middle school with the high school. The connecting corridors provide a pathway for the sharing of educational services between the three school buildings. In all of these building initiatives, the grants were key catalysts to transition the projects from a vision to reality. The school board and administration could easily